ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS AT THE CROSS EMPLACEMENT, BOUCTOUCHE MICMAC RESERVE, KENT COUNTY, NEW BRUNSWICK

by

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No. 11E

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by
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The excavation on the Bouctouche Micmac Reserve were sponsored by the provincial Department of Tourism, Recreation and Heritage, Archaeology Branch, which issued archaeological licence No. 1985 NB-6. Dr. Christopher Turnbull, Provincial Archaeologist, M. Fidèle Thériault, historian, and M. Albert Ferguson, archaeological technician, initiated the background work and research, prior to excavations at the request of the Band Council; the area was being affected by a housing development.

During the excavations the members of the Bouctouche Micmac Band showed much interest in our work. I am particularly indebted to Mr. William Sanipass, whom through his visits -- sometimes two or three times daily -- supplied us with up to date information which enabled us to conduct a more thorough survey of the area. Chief Agnes Sanipass also showed a keen interest in our work. He visited the site almost daily and inquired about our findings.

The present report was prepared in the Archaeology Branch's offices in Fredericton. I must extend my thanks to M. Fidèle Thériault, who supplied me with the records and maps he had gathered during the course of his research on the history of the Bouctouche Reserve. The finished area map, the 1984 and 1985 site maps were prepared by Mr. Angel Gomez-Miguelanez, draftsman "par excellence".

INTRODUCTION

In October 1984, The Council of the Bouctouche Micmac Band contacted the Department of Historical and Cultural Resources to retain the services of a field crew to investigate possible grave sites on Micmac land. Later that year, a one-day preliminary survey of the cross emplacement on the Reserve was undertaken by M. Albert Ferguson, with the Department, assisted by Mrs. Beth Armstrong-Bewick. While the site was overgrown, a collapsed wooden cross and five sand- stone slabs with rectangular holes through their centres were located. It was thought that the latter might be supports for grave markers.

Members of the Bouctouche Band believed that excavations should be undertaken to isolate and delineate human interments. On July 16, 1985, M. Albert Ferguson and the present author commenced archaeological investigations, concluding their work on the 19th of the same month. A series of trenches were excavated in the vicinity of the cross emplacement and in two areas marked off as possible grave sites by Council Members of the Bouctouche Band.

LOCATION

The Site CcDel located on the Boutouche Micmac Reserve is found on the north bank of the Bouctouche River, southwest of

the village of Bouctouche and east of Maria-de-Kent in Kent County, southeastern New Brunswick (Figure 1). The area investigated was the eastern half of a knoll, where a wooden cross once stood (Figure 2).

THE CROSS EMPLACEMENT

In 1984, when the eastern half of the knoll was surveyed, the sandstone slabs did not appear to be layed out in any particular arrangement (Figure 3). However, in 1985 the area had been cleared of underbrush and trees, and the sandstone slabs were evidently disposed in a rectangular formation around the cross emplacement (Figure 2). Furthermore, while no two chisselled squares in any of the sandstone slabs are of equal proportions, the corner stones (D, G, J and M [Figure 2]), display larger holes than the other slabs. Therefore, I would propose that the entire arrangement was a series of supports for fence posts with larger corner-posts, and that a fence surrounded the cross emplacement. Evidence for the fence type was not recovered.

Finally, members of the Boutouche Band mentioned that two small wooden crosses, supposedly grave markers, had been present either on or nearby the southern slope of the knoll, or on the western portion of the same formation. This information originated from individuals who had seen the crosses, about 30 or 40 years ago. Numerous attempts to locate the crosses proved

fruitless. However, this does not negate the possible existence of human burials in the areas discussed above, but it seems very unlikely that human interments would be located in the marshy areas, north and northwest of the knoll.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The cross' location, about 23 m above mean sea level on a knoll, probably acted as an ideal 'beacon' for people travelling by water and hoping to locate the Reserve: on a clear day, the cross must have been visible from the river and harbour (Figure 1).

The earliest record of a cross emplacement is found on an 1869 Department of Indian Affairs map (Figure 4). The emplacement is indicated by the symbol of a cross enclosed within a square parcel of land, four acres in area (1.66 hectares).

Documentary evidence is somewhat obscure regarding the Micmac occupation of the present-day reserve. An 1823 map of Indian Reserves shows that the Bouctouche Reserve was subdivided into lots, but these do not appear to have been granted to individuals (Figure 5). However, a 500 acre parcel of land, east of the present day Reserve and Noel's Creek had been granted to Noel John, in or prior to 1823. Undoubtedly, the creek is named after Noel John, the Micmac Chief (F. Thériault, August 6, 1985, Personal Communication). The main settlement,

however, was located east of the present-day Reserve, where 93 Micmacs resided (Perley 1842:CV; Ganong 1906:80).

Until 1888, it appears that the modern-day Reserve was populated sparsely:

> "The Indian settlement at Boutouche [sic] is now at Noel Creek, two miles west of the village of Boutouche [sic]; but Mr. H.A. O'Leary, who knows the region well tells me that formerly (up to about 1840) the main Indian settlement was on the bluff at the northern end of the present highway bridge, where now is the oldest part of the village. Indians lived at Indian Point until about 18 years ago [circa 1888] when they moved to Noel Creek. An old Indian burial ground is also known above the old bridge on the north side of Black River." (Ganong 1906:80).

Around 1899, the same location is mentioned for the Bouctouche settlement and Reserve: "two miles west of Boutouche [sic] Village", essentially their present location (Ganong 1899:230).

A number of nineteenth century maps show the land division for the Bouctouche Reserve. However, these maps are not dated. They merely indicate that parcels of land were allocated to potential residents.

Upon examination of the 1869 map (Figure 4), it seems plausible that the cross emplacement had been delineated prior to the allocation of lots, the reason being that the emplacement is not aligned with the lots, occupying a large portion John

Jerome's land and overlapping west on John Stevens' property, and east on the parcel of land allocated to Augustine Jerome (Figure 4).

The documentary evidence presented above suggests the existence of a four-acre (1.66 hectares) cross emplacement in 1869, perhaps layed out before that date. Furthermore, the population of the area might have been meager until the late nineteenth-century relocation onto the Bouctouche Reserve. Finally, the Micmac residents have just begun, over the past few years, to return to Bouctouche. It seems that early during the present century, these Micmacs moved to the Big Cove Reserve, returning only recently to Bouctouche, as the former Reserve is now overpopulated.

EXCAVATIONS

Eight trenches were excavated over a period of three days. They were excavated using shovel-shining in order to investigate as large an area as possible. When features thought to be human disturbances were encountered, trowels were utilized to identify their extent.

Trench 1: Located on the south slope of the knoll, in an area marked off as a probable grave site by the Bouctouche residents, Trench 1 was 1.60 by 0.40 m (Figure 2). Its length truncated the base of a so-called "burial mound". The trench's

stratigraphy consisted of a humic layer (O-horizon), an orange to red sandy soil (A-horizon), and a brown clayey soil, consolidated in areas, and including sandstone pebbles and boulders (B-horizon). This natural stratigraphy showed no human or animal disturbances and was free of artifacts.

The natural feature that prompted the trends was one of many occurring on both the north and south slopes of the knoll. These "mounds" are the result of root growths or tree falls buried through the accumulation of organic and mineral materials: falling and wind-blown spruce needles, leaves from deciduous trees, branches and twigs, as well as wind-blown sand and sediments carried by the down-slope drainage.

Trench 2: This trench (1.40 by 0.40 m), truncated the base of yet another "mound" located on the north slope of the knoll (Figure 2). It stratigraphy and formation duplicate those of the first mound discussed above; it is a natural formation.

Trench 3: This 12.0 by 0.40 m trench ran in an east-west direction, immediately south of the present cross emplacement (Figure 2). Furthermore, it overlapped the eastern and southern limits of the once fenced-areas.

The excavations revealed a natural stratigraphy, a humic layer (O-horizon) and an orange to red sandy soil (A-horizon), except where the trench intersected the eastern and southern

fence lines; there, small sandstone slabs were exposed after the humic layer had been removed. Excavations of Trenches 4 and 5, however, showed these sandstone slabs to be natural features. Trench 3 did not yield evidence of human or animal disturbances.

Trench 4: This trench was excavated in order to determine the extent of sandstone slabs located at the southern fence line in Trench 3. Trench 4 ran for three meters southwest of Trench 3 and was 0.50 m wide (Figure 2). As mentioned above, the sandstone slabs located in Trench 3 were not placed there by man. This natural feature did not extend into Trench 4, where the undisturbed 'O' and 'A' horizons were identified.

Trench 5: The second of two such excavations, Trench 5, like its counterpart, Trench 4, revealed the natural soil development (O and A horizons). This 3.0 by 0.50 m trench extended northwest from Trench 3, where a single sandstone slab had been exposed (Figure 2). The excavation of this trench did not reveal any human activity.

Trench 6: This 1.0 by 1.0 meter pit was situated northeast of the cross emplacement on a "mound" adjacent to the cross (Figure 2). Its excavation showed the presence of an old tree stump and roots, in an otherwise natural soil development: a humic layer (O-horizon) and an orange to red sandy soil (A-horizon). No trace of human activity was identified.

Trench 7: The seventh trench (5.0 by 0.50 m) was located northwest of the cross emplacement, approximately in an east-west orientation (Figure 2). Its excavation revealed the natural humic O-horizon and the orange to red A-horizon. The soil was not subjected to human or animal disturbances.

Trench 8: This 4.0 by 0.50 m trench was layed out east of the cross emplacement and in a north-south orientation (Figure 2). The natunal 'O' and 'A' horizons were encountered, except in a small area of the trench where a pink sandy soil with charcoal was identified. The latter feature was probably the result of a brush fire. Obviously, the fire burned long enough to extend into the root network of certain trees or brush. Some of the Micmacs from the Bouctouche Reserve remembered extinguishing a brush fire in that area a few years ago, however, they could not state with certitude the year when the area burned.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The archaeology on the Bouctouche Reserve did not yield any information regarding the age of the cross emplacement or the presence of human interments in the area. It is very surprising indeed that no artifacts, prehistoric or historic, were recovered on the surface or in the excavations. Perhaps this can be explained as follows: the present-day residents of the Reserve consider that the cross emplacement has religious and historical value. Recent oral history suggests that it is

possible that Mass was celebrated at the site and that at least two graves are present, close or in the vicinity of the cross. Furthermore, oral history suggests that the area was likely used as a place for gatherings. Hence, it is possible that the cross emplacement was respected and that people visiting and meeting in that location would be careful not to leave anything behind. It is also possible that the area is solely a cross emplacement and not a cemetery or meeting place.

Today the cross emplacement holds similar values for the Micmacs. Early in 1985, Mr. Gilbert Sanipass buried the old cross where it had collapsed. Children do not play on the knoll and adults still hold much respect for this area of the Reserve.

In view of the present historical and archaeological research, I can only reiterate statements presented above regarding the age of the site. It is certain that the emplacement existed in 1869, and it is possible that it was established prior to that date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the Members of the Bouctouche Reserve wish to preserve the cross emplacement, a few suggestions can be made regarding its protection for future generations. It is known that the emplacement was a four-acre area (1.66 hectares). It remains uncertain, however, that the cross was erected at the centre

point of the four acres, although it seems plausible if one considers the cross's position on the 1869 survey plan (Figure 4). The above information suggests that a four acre area should be delineated by a land surveyor. Furthermore, it is certain that the knoll should be included within its boundaries, but the marsh north and northwest of the knoll should be excluded, for reasons explained earlier in this report. Finally, landscaping should not entail excavations, as human interments could be unearthed, if indeed they are present. Fill can be added to the existing surface, however, without any risk of damage to the possible graves; it would only protect them further.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Area Map of Bouctouche

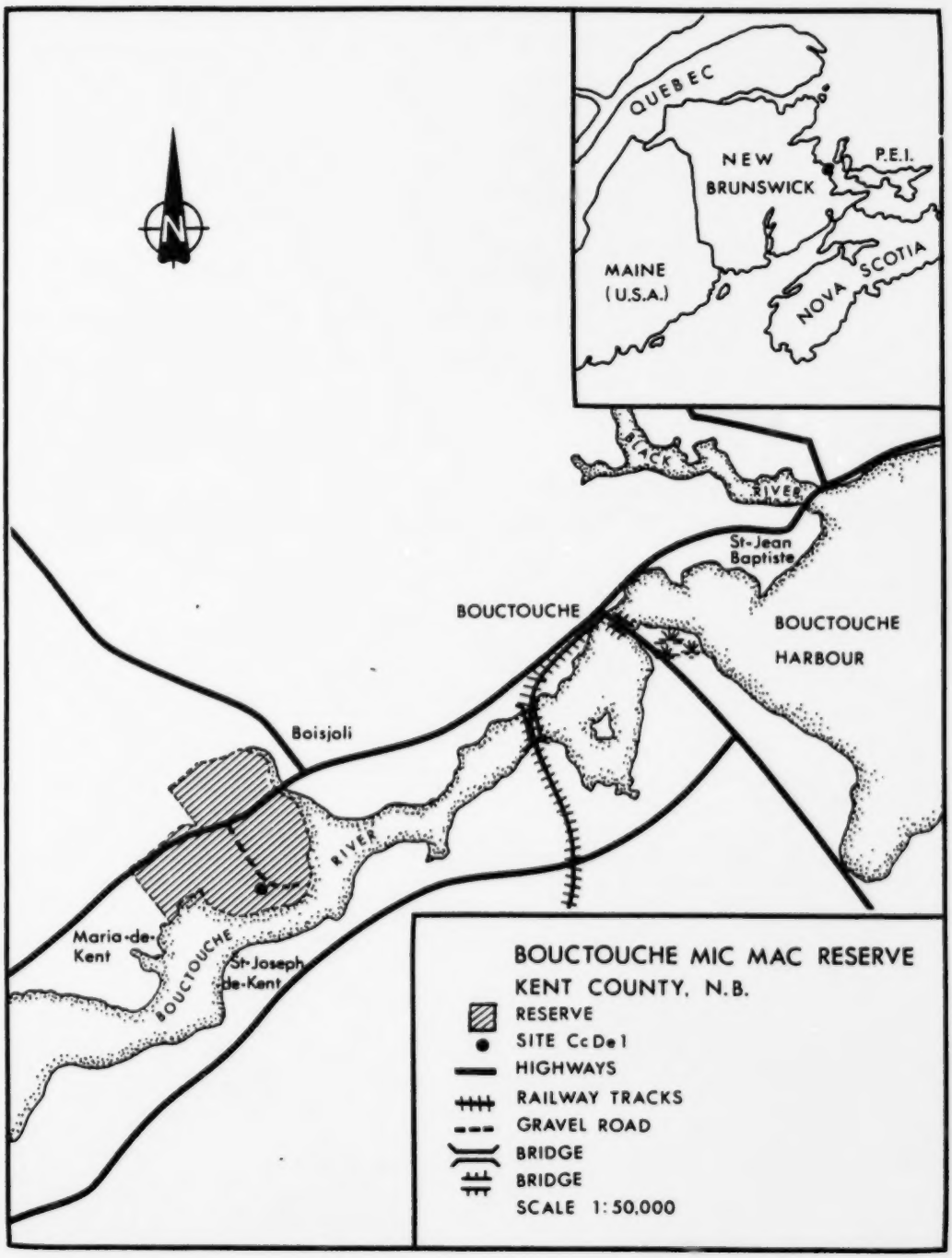

QUEBEC
NEW BRUNSWICK
P.E.I.
MAINE (U.S.A.)
NOVA SCOTIA
BLACK RIVER
St-Jean Baptiste
BOUCTOUCHE
BOUCTOUCHE HARBOUR
Boisjoli
RIVER
Maria-de-Kent
BOUCTOUCHE
St-Joseph de-Kent
BOUCTOUCHE MIC MAC RESERVE
KENT COUNTY, N.B.
RESERVE
SITE CcDe1
HIGHWAYS
RAILWAY TRACKS
GRAVEL ROAD
BRIDGE
BRIDGE
SCALE 1:50,000

FIGURE 2: Plan Showing Excavation Units on the Bouctouche Micmac Reserve

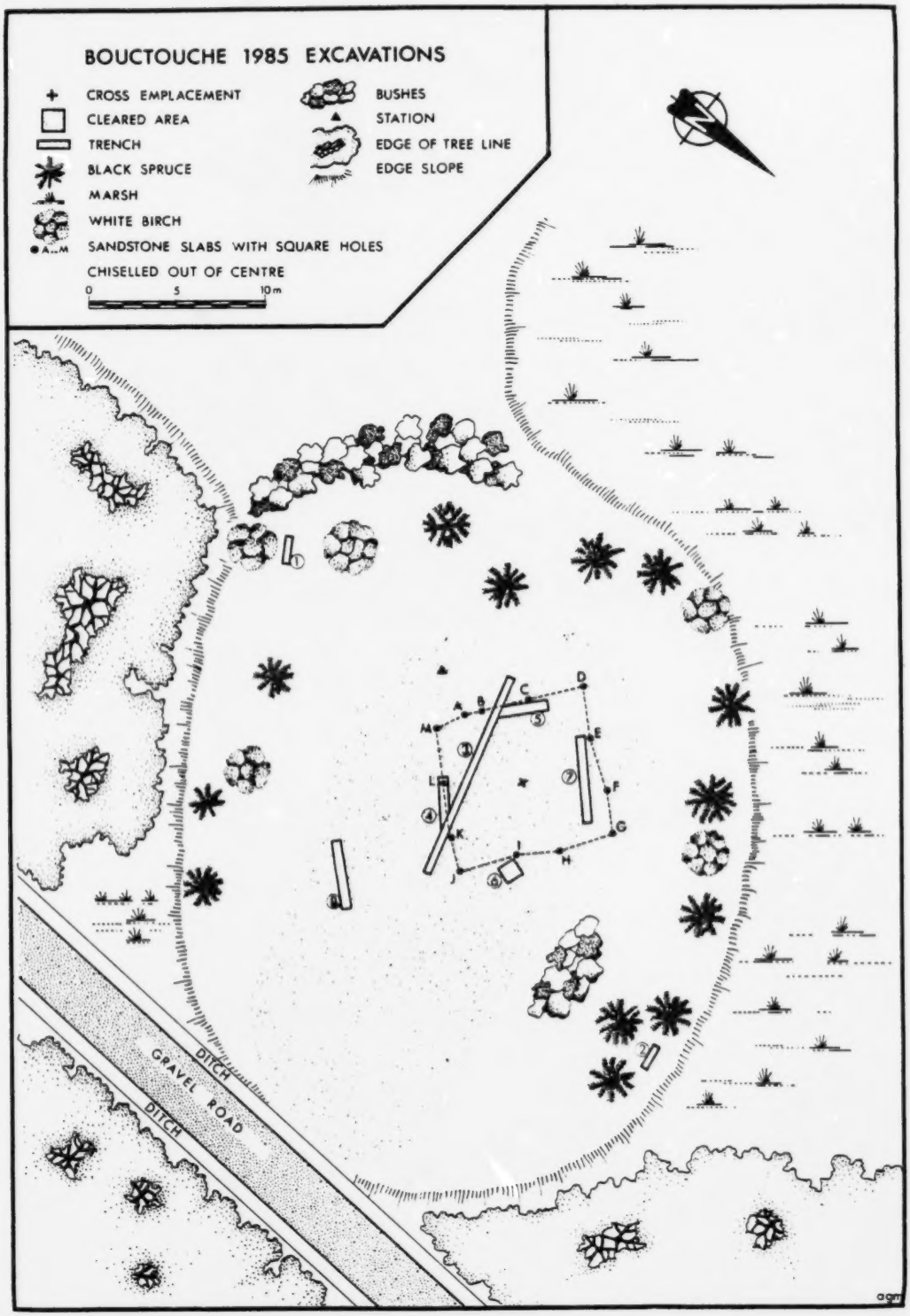

BOUCTOUCHE 1985 EXCAVATIONS
CROSS EMPLACEMENT
CLEARED AREA
TRENCH
BLACK SPRUCE
MARSH
WHITE BIRCH
A...M SANDSTONE SLABS WITH SQUARE HOLES CHISELLED OUT OF CENTRE
0 5 10m
BUSHES
STATION
EDGE OF TREE LINE
EDGE SLOPE
N
A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
J
K
L
M
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
DITCH
GRAVEL ROAD
DITCH

FIGURE 3: 1984 Survey Plan of Cross Employment

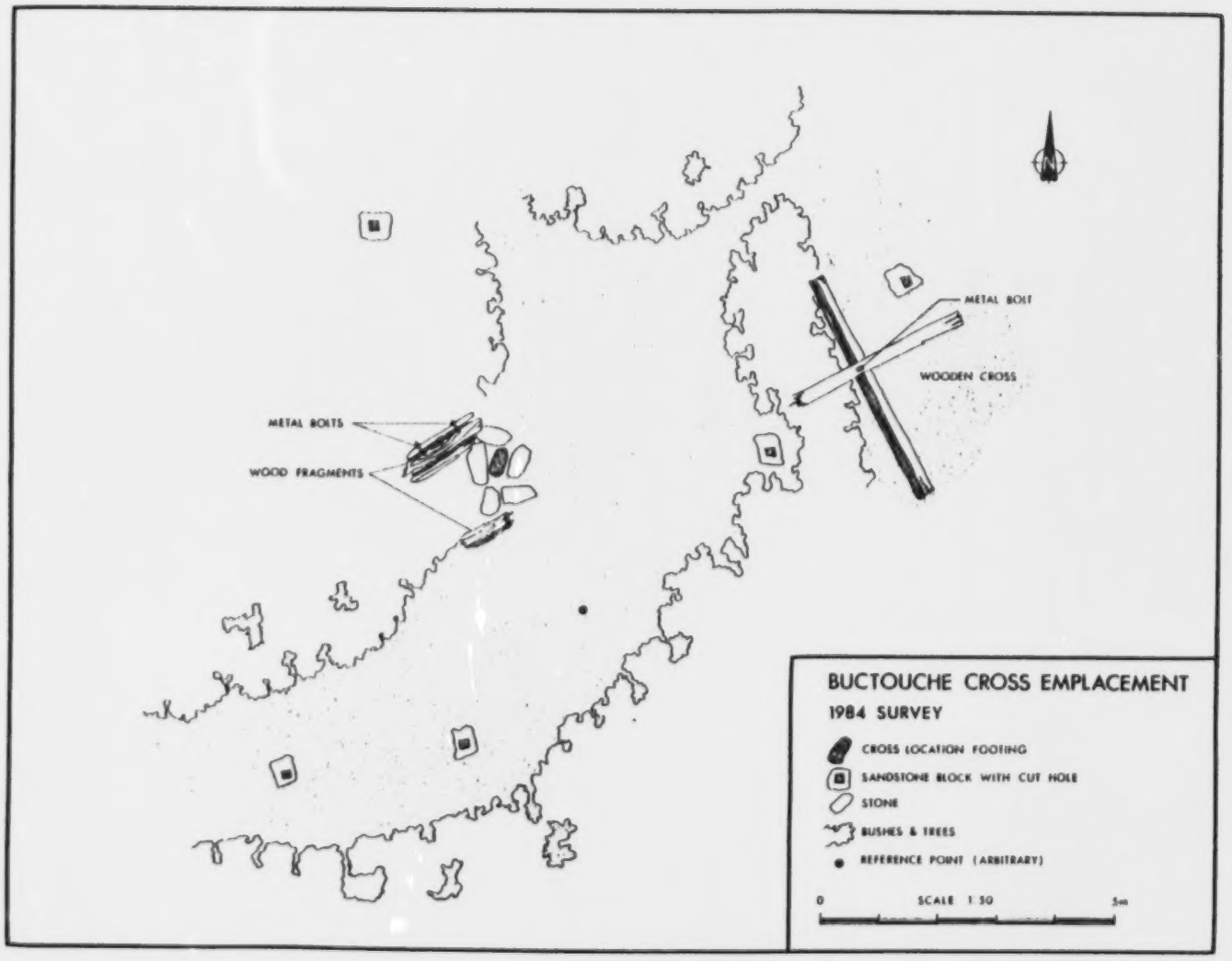
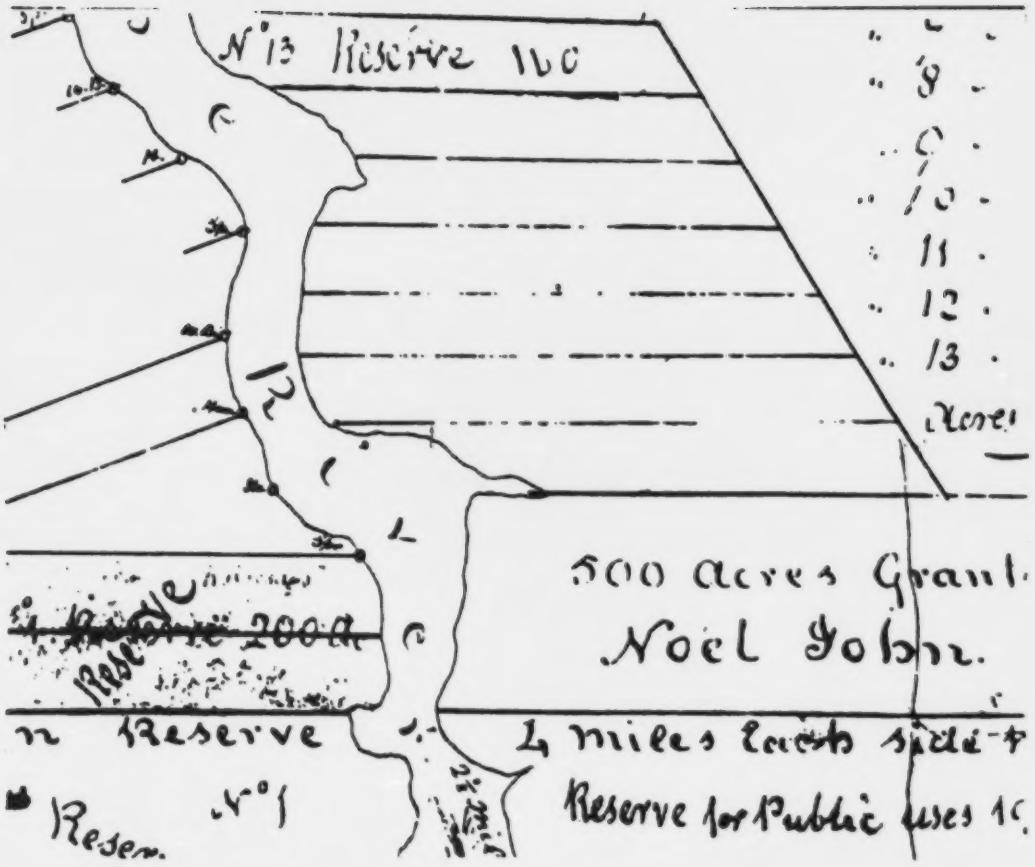

METAL BOLT
WOODEN CROSS
METAL BOLTS
WOOD FRAGMENTS
BUCTOUCHE CROSS EMPLACEMENT
1984 SURVEY
CROSS LOCATION FOOTING
SANDSTONE BLOCK WITH CUT HOLE
STONE
BUSHES & TREES
REFERENCE POINT (ARBITRARY)
0
SCALE 1:50
5m

FIGURE 4: 1869 Department of Indian Affairs Survey Plan of Reserve Lands

Scale of chains
RIVER

FIGURE 5: 1823 Plan of Reserve Lands, Bouctouche


N°13 Reserve 100
500 Acres Grant
Noel Gobar.
Reserve 200 a
Reserve
Reserve N°1
Reserve for Public uses

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